2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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793 767 and officiate in the ceremonies, but it is perhaps true to say that only the beasts for minor sacrifices (recovery from illnesses, etc.) are killed by them. Hofmayr states that the distinctive mark of the *hawak* is a necklace of disc beads of ostrich egg-shell, but that they also [292 301] wear anklets of glass beads, white and green. The *hawak* eat the flesh of the sacrifices and drink the milk of the cattle belonging to the shrine; they are responsible too for the disposal of the bones of the sacrifice, which they cast into the river.

778 346 The contents of the *kango* vary, but they always include certain sacred spears, called *alodo*, representing those used by Nyakang and his companions.

In 1910 we were told that one of the five huts of the Fenikang shrine was in a special sense the house of Nyakang, which he was thought to inhabit. It was distinguished by a number of very rough [532] paintings on its outer wall, some of which could be recognized as representing animals, but we could not learn that the paintings had any special significance. Before the door of the hut were a number [114 227] of horns of the cattle slain in sacrifice (in 1911 wrongly described as elephant tusks), their broad ends thrust into the ground; within there were said to be skins on the floor, as if for Nyakang to rest upon. Some of the "spears of Nyakang" (*alodo*) are kept here, and there is in this shrine an extremely sacred stool, which may be kept in this hut or may be preserved with some of the sacred spears and a number of elephant tusks in one of the other huts of the shrine, used by the guardians and for storing the millet brought as offerings when the crop is cut. In 1921 we were struck afresh with the resemblance of the shrine to a homestead, with exceptionally large huts; it had been rebuilt since 1910, when we first visited Fenikang, and there were now no horns in front of any hut. At this 793 778 time (1921) the shrine had been entrusted by the king to the care of a most intelligent elderly Dinka woman, by name Aker—widow of the kings Kur and Fadiet—who was the chief priestess of the shrine. She had three huts and a cattle byre near the shrine; in one hut she ● [667] kept her beer, and here millet was ground, the two others were for her slaves, who as well as her cattle were provided by the king. We are not certain whether she ever slept in the shrine. According [644 843] to Shilluk custom Aker had left Kodok during her two pregnancies, but on neither occasion had she been sent to Fenikang; it is, indeed, improbable that a royal wife would be sent to a village containing a shrine, as it might be difficult to accommodate her cattle and those of the shrine attendants as well as the village beasts.

J. Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 F323 Shilluk F323

MARRIAGE AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

On the average number of children in a family vide page XXIII. The birth of twins is regarded as the greatest of good fortune.

Affection of parents for their children is not wanting. The mother often places the infant in a long basket or bed made of grass; this she carries on her head or carries with a mat in some secure place, while the child sleeps. Education is limited to teaching the children the work and skill which the parents command.

The naming of the children is done by some member of the family, in most cases by the parents or grandparents. The name generally has some connection with circumstances attending the birth. The name *Agar* ("she died") is often given when the birth occurs in close proximity to a death in the family. *Nwomlig* is a very common name; it indicates that the mother of the child has prayed for a child by sweeping a sacred house (a temple of *Nyikang* or of some other ancient king) with a branch of straw. Men often acquire a second name when grown up; this one is in most cases called after the name of a cow or an ox.

When the boys are from thirteen to fifteen years old, they start the cultivation of a small field of their own, for the result of which they try to acquire credit. — The boys and young men of a village born in the same year form a companionship, all member of such a "class" having a common name. The young men of a village do not sleep in their parents' houses, but their common sleeping place is in the cow-shed of the village. The act of sleeping in the barn is called "sleeping in the ashes" from the fact that they during this time sleep in the ashes of the fire kept smouldering in the barn.

SLAVES

The Shilluks have some slaves secured before the present régime. Some of these are Shilluks, others are from the Kordofan and also from further up the Nile. They were secured in war or purchased from the Arabs. In single cases Shilluk parents sold their children for food in time of famine, or gave them away to chiefs.

BURIAL

When a grown-up man dies, he is buried in or just before his hut. An ox is killed as a funeral feast, and its horns are planted on the grave so that they are visible from without. Women and children are buried in the bush. — *For a description of a burial vide pages 111 and 135.*

Some time after the death of a man a funeral ceremony is held; it takes place when the property of the deceased is divided among his heirs; this may be from about one month to one year after the person has died. The warriors of the neighbouring villages are invited. An ox is killed on the occasion. The ceremony consists in dancing, making displays of arms, feasting on the meat of the slain ox, and drinking merisa. The women also partake in it. Whether any religious notions are connected with it, I do not know.

3 Westermann E-5 (2910) 1912 F323 Shelltab F323

right to the throne. If all the sons of a king die, before it is the turn of one of them to become king, that family loses its royal prerogatives. A left-handed or otherwise deformed man cannot be crowned. When from such or a similar reason the son of a king fails to be crowned, his posterity loses the right to the throne.

As a rule only a man can be king; though once a queen reigned, she apparently did not command a great authority, vide page 143; and it is characteristic that in the lists given by Bandelier and Dr. Gilbert her name is not mentioned.

The way in which the king is elected, vide pages 122 ff. Of course frequently party intrigues are at work on these occasions, and it may have been not quite an uncommon occurrence that there were several candidates for the throne, supported by different factions; sometimes there were even two kings, residing in different places of the country.

The power of the king was, previous to the British occupation, absolute; he disposed on life and death of his subjects. The subjects had to pay heavy taxes in cattle, corn, beans, skins for clothes, and under certain circumstances, to persons also. POWER OF THE KING

All judicial cases may be brought before the king, with whom lies the final decision. They have an unwritten code of law, providing fixed penalties and fines. Cattle thieves were formerly killed on the spot by the owner of the stolen property. If the thief escaped, but was located with the stolen thing, the owner demanded it. In case the thief refused to give it up and the owner was unable to get it by force, he then reported to his chief, and if he failed there, the matter went to the king, who punished the case perhaps by taking his property and some girls from his village for himself. JURISDICTION

In the case of certain infractions of the law the convict became the slave of the king, and could no more return to his home. These slaves are known as *tpai enjé* ("man of crime") or *ndjoy*. The king gives to such a man a wife. Their children are slaves at the royal court and are called *ndjoy*. To the male descendants of such the king gives wives, and the females are taken to be given to male members of the *ndjoy* class as wives. If the king does not have enough girls in the *ndjoy* class to supply all the young men with wives, he buys free girls for the purpose, their descendants become also slaves.

In some cases the criminal becomes the slave of a *chief*; these are also called *ndjoy*.

Murder cases were tried by a court of chiefs and the king. If the man was condemned, he was disgraced in many ways before the people. Sometimes he was led about the village with a cow-rope around his neck, and then executed by hanging. If a man was executed on account of a crime, his whole family

(a) *Nyareth* - The son of a *Nyareth*.
(d) *Dawnyareth* - The grandson of a *Nyareth*.

In some regions the members of the royal clan have become more numerous than commoners and have supplanted them in the chieftainship of the settlements. This has been possible because the members of the royal clan are richer and tend to marry more wives, and also because of the system whereby the offspring of a *reth* are planted out in various settlements away from Fashoda. When one of the *reth's* wives is about to give birth to a child she leaves Fashoda and goes to her own village. As soon as the *nyareth* is weaned he is placed in charge of some trustworthy settlement chief, often the mother's brother, and is brought up among his mother's people. When the child grows up and marries he builds a separate hamlet called *pa nyareth* (unless he is called on to become *reth*), and thus becomes the founder of a local lineage branch of the royal clan which may eventually grow powerful enough to overthrow the dominant lineage and assume the political aspects of its position in the settlement.

Daughters of a *reth* are not allowed to marry and therefore cannot start lineages which would count as sister's sons to the royal house.

The *Orure*

This clan is separate from the royal clan and consists of the descendants of a disinherited branch. They are few in number and may intermarry with the royal clan. It is said that the *reth* still has the right to dispossess lineages of the royal clan but, apart from one traditional instance, it is not certain whether the right has been exercised. The *orure* are indistinguishable from the commoner clans except for the special functions they perform for the *reth* at his investiture and at the time of his funeral. Traditionally, the *orure* always smother the *reth* when he is ritually killed. The *reth* always takes some of his wives from the *orure*.

The *Bang Reth*

The *bang reth* are the personal attendants of the *reth*. Originally they were captives from other tribes but later, volunteers from the commoner clans in Shillukland, if they were poverty stricken, might leave their own clans and become the *reth's* retainers. In return for receiving cattle to marry with they tended animals, engaged in building and cultivation and performed all the duties connected with the upkeep of the royal household. Apart from these and their descendants, the *bang reth* also included all those who were enslaved because their brothers were homicides and those who became possessed by the spirit of *Nyikang*.

The *bang reth* are a fictitious clan; they cannot intermarry even though there is often no blood relationship among them. The *reth* never marries into the *bang reth* clan and, as an indication of the impossibility of this, he calls the daughter of a retainer *kwaro*, 'my grand-daughter'.

The *bang reth* live in a hamlet of their own near the capital in which the *reth* resides. When he dies they, together with his elderly widows, go and live near his shrine and look after it. When a *nyareth* is planted out, his father sends some of his retainers to live with him; these become *bang*

9 Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 F323 Shilluk F323

year round and only the youths go to the cattle camps in the riverain pastures, which are never more than a few miles from their villages. The Shilluk are not a pastoral people in the sense that the Nuer and Dinka are, and rely to a much greater extent on agricultural products and on fish, for they are skilled and experienced fishermen. Since their migration to their present territory, it is probable that they have never had a very large cattle population, for their riverain pasture is not extensive.[1]

Shilluk clans[2] are not territorial in basis for they are highly segmented and widely distributed throughout the settlements of Shilluk country; as corporate units they have no real significance except at times of national festivals, and then only in the sphere of ritual and ceremony.

The Shilluk are divided into four main classes or groups of clans:

(i) The *dawerk*: the royal house, who trace descent from Nyikang and from whom the *reth* of the Shilluk is chosen.

(ii) The *nwor*: a disinherited branch of the royal house who do not differ from commoners except in the special functions they perform at the installation of the *reth*, during his lifetime, and at his death. They are a distinct exogamous clan, though they may intermarry with the *dawerk* despite common ancestry.

(iii) The *colo*: the name refers collectively to the main body of the Shilluk clans of which a large number trace descent patrilineally from (*a*) the original followers of Nyikang, (*b*) individuals of other tribes who have migrated and settled in Shilluk country from early times onwards, and (*c*) ancestors who are lost in antiquity, but who may have occupied Shilluk country before the arrival of Nyikang.

(iv) The *bang reth*: the personal attendants of the *reth*, his wives or wives of past *reths*; the descendants of royal slaves obtained by capture; those who volunteer to serve him by reason of their possession by the spirit of Nyikang,[3] and paupers who volunteer for this form of service in order to exist at all. Finally, there are the alleged descendants of those who were enslaved because their close kinsmen committed homicide, though this statement must be examined more critically later.

There are no real caste distinctions between *dawerk*, *nwor*, *colo*, and *bang reth* and, apart from restrictions on the marriages of daughters of a living or past *reth*, they intermarry freely. The *dawerk*, however, by reason of their connexion with Nyikang and subsequent *reths*, are treated with special respect and this extends to those *bang reth* who have close association with the shrines of Nyikang or of dead kings. The Shilluk basic social structure is very similar to that of the Nuer and Dinka, though there are important differences. The segmentation of the population into territorial units and of the clans into localised lineages has, however, a greater permanency and stability. The distinctive feature of the Shilluk political structure is the existence of an established and theoretically omnipotent monarchy and it is in the political sphere

[1] An accurate census taken during the veterinary campaign against trypanosomiasis gives a figure of 25,000. This was after a very severe epidemic in 1946 and it may be assumed that they had lost at least 50 per cent. of their stock. A human census, accurate to any rate within 15 per cent., gives a population figure of 110,000. The ratio of human population to cattle population is therefore between 1:0·3 and 1:0·23. Cf. Nuer where highest ratio given is 1:0·3 and the lowest 1:1·2.

[2] *Kwe*: Literally 'descendants of', prefixing the name of the clan. '*Kwe* Okelo'—the descendants of Okelo—and so on.

[3] Often now attendants at the many shrines of Nyikang.

9 Stowell E-5 (1937-1950) 1954 F323 Shilluk F323

There are also scattered references by Hofmayr, who writes:

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When the number of dead and wounded is equal on both sides, they stop fighting; then the king will hold a Court and punish the party who is in the wrong. . . . In the case of mortal wounds, the penalty is an ox. In the case of death, ten head of cattle have to be paid and formerly a maiden instead of the cattle. This heavy fine is paid to the king who in return would give two or three oxen to the family of the deceased for the mourning dance.

Later, talking of the reign of *reth* Kur, he says:

Two villages, Bel and Pelwo, were fighting over a beautiful maiden. There was much blood shed on both sides. The king went to Pelwo and at night time he occupied the village. Next morning he sat in Court and took all the ornaments and cattle away from the village, even the shadow of the village. As he favoured Bel, he never did anything there.[1]

[114]

Westermann, whose information is least reliable, states that:

Murder cases were tried by a court of chiefs and the king. If a man was condemned, he was disgraced in many ways before the people. Sometimes he was led about the village with a rope round his neck, and then executed by hanging. If a man was executed on account of a crime, his whole family and everything he possessed became the property of the king.[2]

and also that:

[567]

In the case of certain infractions of the law the convict became the slave of the king, and could no more return to his home. These slaves are known as *rpe wod* (' man of crime ') or *adwe* [' slaves ' of the Royal Household].

Apart from a description of a peace ceremony performed by the *reth* published by the Reverend D. S. Oyler, which will be discussed later, there are few references in published literature to homicide and the settlement of blood-feuds among the Shilluk. Naturally enough, administrative records contain frequent references to the subject because the Administration has been much concerned with the matter. Pumphrey, who was perhaps best qualified to weigh the evidence, unfortunately does not describe the procedures in detail nor record actual instances.

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A full description of a peace ceremony between the warring settlements of Dwati and Thwaro already mentioned was recorded in the Shilluk District files by Major G. W. Titherington in 1932. He writes as follows:

A peace ceremony was celebrated by the *reth* of the Shilluk between the settlers of Dwati and Thwaro on their traditional battle-ground on 2-3-32.

This feud is the most bitter and bloody of modern times and in about twenty years probably some fifty casualties have occurred in fighting and by retaliatory murder, and the numerous attempts to stop it have failed. Peace had been in the air since the Shilluk Chiefs' meeting in January, and, all preliminaries having been agreed to, the *reth* arrived to stay with the local Chief on February 29th. He saw all Chiefs and Headmen concerned on March 1st and 2nd. He then went to Thwaro where the Court Chief brought a guard of about one hundred spears. These were in formation and fully armed, but in undress and without shields. The four Thwaro companies took about an hour and a half to get assembled. There were about five hundred men on parade and (by then) all fully equipped, drums and horns were in full blast and everyone in a much sweat and vast excitement. The *reth* addressed them briefly and they replied that they wanted peace. He got them on the move,

[1] Hofmayr, *op. cit.* [2] Westermann, *The Shilluk People*, 1912, p. 160.

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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being crimes against the community, was that in cases of homicide the murderer (or his brother if the murderer was uncaptured) was compelled to become a *Bang Reth*.

Relations between a *Reth* and his retainers were friendly, nor does the treatment of those who were enslaved as a punishment appear to have differed from that of those voluntarily enlisted. The custom was for the retainers of each *Reth* to make a village for themselves near Fashoda. There they would live until the *Reth* died. The *Reth's* body would then be taken to this village and sealed up in a house where it would remain until entirely decomposed. Only then would the house be removed by his retainers and buried in his original village. Some of the dead *Reth's* retainers would then move to the village where he was buried and their descendants would there remain with the perpetual obligation of tending his shrine. Others would remain at their village near Fashoda and would have no further obligations to the memory of their dead patron except that they and their descendants would for ever be known as "*Bang Reth Kwolkker*" or "*Bang Reth Nyakwac*" or as the case might be.

The retainers of a particular *Reth*, having severed connexion with their own clan, became a fictitious clan in themselves. As such they cannot intermarry, though there may be no relationship of blood. Nor could a *Reth* marry a daughter or sister of one of his retainers. A *Reth* would address the daughter of a retainer as *kwaro* (my granddaughter) which well indicates the relationship subsisting between them.

Under the present regime, partly because the Government has frowned upon the practice and partly because the *Reths* are now deprived of their previous source of wealth, the *Reth* has none of these traditional retainers. To-day the *Bang Reth* comprise the descendants of retainers of previous *Reths*. In some cases they have removed themselves to a new locality but in any case they remain for ever *Bang Reth* "A" or *Bang Reth* "B" (in accordance with the name of the *Reth* their ancestors served) and never rejoin their original clan.

When a *Nyireth* was planted out the *Reth* used to send to live with him a few of his own retainers who became *Bang Nyireth* and

17: Pumphrey G-S (1934-1938) 1941
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Recently, owing to the cultivation of cotton and to the increase in demand for work at Malakal and elsewhere, the value of money has come to be more appreciated. Most of the money so acquired is stored up for the purchase of a bull, very little being spent in shops. The purchaser of a bull not unreasonably objects to its going into the maw of the *goi* herd and accordingly deposits it for safe keeping with a distant friend. This innovation, which is no less than the introduction of a system of private ownership of cattle, is calculated to work eventually a deep change in customary law. The growth of cash-mindedness has already resulted in cash being sometimes substituted for a bull in cases of payments in compensation for sexual wrongs. No case is known where cash has been accepted instead of one or more of the bride wealth cattle, but this would be logically the next step. The effect of a change to cash bride wealth would be large. The present system makes for tribal cohesion and for the administratively convenient system of vicarious responsibility, whereas cash marriage payments would loosen remaining cohesion of the *goi* and render each man responsible for himself. Cattle would cease to become a medium of exchange in marriage contracts and become a commodity. The innumerable goats would cease to eat up the cotton and the products of the Mission gardens and instead themselves be eaten, much to the benefit of the Shilluk physique according to medical opinion. The economic absurdity of the Malakal Hospital contractor being sometimes compelled to import tinned milk by air so as not to forfeit his deposit would be avoided. The possibility of such economic advantages is to be set against the consequent lessening of tribal cohesion.

Succession.

There are no definite rules for the inheritance of chattels. Distribution usually takes place before death. If not they will generally be taken by the eldest son, or, in default of sons, by the next-of-kin to the deceased. The inheritance of chattels rarely produces litigation.

Cattle are taken by the succeeding *goi* leader, who may be a married son or a married brother according to circumstances. In any case the new *goi* leader holds the cattle inherited under the same trust as

19: Howell & Thomson E, C-5 (1943-1944)1946
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they perform in connection with the reth. They are a distinct clan

(iii) The Colo—the name refers collectively to the main body of Shilluk clans (*kwoc*), of which there are a large number — trace descent patrilineally from (a) the original followers of Nyikang, (b) those individuals of other tribes who have migrated and settled in Shilluk country from early times onwards and c) those who are lost in antiquity, but who may have been the people who occupied Shilluk country before the arrival of Nyikang: their traditions certainly confirm this

(iv) The Bang Reth, the personal attendants of the reth, his wives or wives of the past reths, which are in many case inherited by the successor, and the descendants of the royal slaves obtained by capture from those who volunteer to serve the reth by reason of their possession by the spirit of Nyikang, or paupers who volunteer to serve him in order to exist at all, and those persons who were enslaved because their brothers committed homicide

There is no real caste distinction between the Kwareth and Colo. Moreover the Kwareth are themselves a patrilineal clan and therefore exogamous, and there is no mutual ban on marriage between them and the main body of the people, except in the case of the reth's daughters, who are not allowed to marry at all. The Kwareth, however, by reason of their connection with Nyikang and previous reths are treated with special respect.

The Shilluk have less cattle than their Nuer and Dinka neighbours and being predominantly sedentary rely more upon agricultural products. Apart from cultivation—almost entirely millet—and the milk and meat from their cattle, the Shilluk supplement their diet with fish and they have the reputation among other tribes of being exceptionally skilled fishermen. Except for the more permanent territorial basis of their settlements, the basic social structure is very

20: Thomson G-S (1945-1946) 1948 F J23 Shilluk F J23

FURTHER NOTES ON THE DEATH OF A RETH OF THE SHILLUK (1945)

By W. P. G. Thomson.

These notes are intended to amplify the article "The Death of a *Reth* of the Shilluk and the Installation of his Successor" by Mr. P. P. Howell and myself published in *Sudan Notes & Records* Vol. XXVII, 1946. 121

No attempt is made to describe the ceremonies in full. The general pattern followed that of 1944 and these notes are chiefly concerned with the differences observed on this occasion, and the reasons given by the Shilluk for these differences. It was interesting to observe that in several cases where points of ceremonial differed, the procedure reverted to that of January 1918 described by Munro in *Sudan Notes & Records* Vol. I, 1918.

The disposal of the Body and Soul of Reth Anei.

The course of events was as follows :—

Reth Anei Kur died on November 10th 1945. He had been ill for some days, apparently from an attack of relapsing fever, which was prevalent among the Shilluk at the time; he was known to have a bad heart, and had in fact had a heart attack some months previously in Malakal hospital. A Shilluk medical assistant, present at Fashoda at the time of the *reth's* death, reported that he died in his arms of heart failure. This is as good evidence as we are likely to obtain that *reth* Anei died a natural death. 693

I was invited, as in 1943, to pay my last respects to the corpse. This I did on November 11th, and the scene was similar to that of 1943, but simpler. The corpse was fanned by sisters of the *reth*, and his wives were sat in the house with the corpse. Several were observed outside. The reed mats were not so elaborate as in 1943 and there were no cloth curtains. 766

The corpse was not immediately buried, as happened in 1943, but was taken on the night of 11.11.45 to a small hamlet belonging to the village of Fadwok, (the village of the Bang Reth Kur — slaves of *reth* Kur, the father of Anei) some three quarters of a mile from Fashoda, and sealed up in a hut. These proceedings were naturally secret, and I was not invited to enquire into details. This method of disposing of the corpse was a reversion to tradition: there is no evidence that a [567]

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

565 563 term applies only to the descendants of the original companions of Nyikang, but in practice it embraces the whole of the common people and includes those who were probably in possession of the land before the coming of the Shilluk and who were conquered and absorbed into the tribe, and individuals of other tribes who, whatever their origin, have come into the country and settled there, eventually merging with the people.

565 644 [567] The last class is that of the Bang Reth, the servants of the king. This group is made up of the king's personal attendants, his wives and the wives of former kings, and the descendants of former royal slaves. It includes also those who have taken up special service with the king because of their reverence for his sacred office as Vicar of Nyikang, those who by reason of their utter destitution have been driven to accept the yoke of bondage to the king that they might share the bounty of the royal table, and those who [567] [681] have been enslaved on account of a crime committed by some member of their family who himself has escaped the king's justice.

565 582 Marriage is permitted between the Kwareth and members of the other three classes with certain exceptions. Thus, for example, a Kwareth may marry into the Bareth, but he may not wed the former wife of a king, or the widow of a king. The daughters of a king may not marry at all; since in theory all the cattle in the land belong to the king, no one can offer him a dowry, and so his daughters must go unmarried. In 644 565 582 marriage the great rule of exogamy, that is marriage outside the clan, must be observed. Now the Kwareth form only one clan, as also do the Ororo, but the Colo and the Bang Reth are divided into several clans. A member of the Kwareth class may not therefore marry another Kwareth, or a member of the Ororo another of the same class, but members of the Colo and the Bareth may marry into other clans of the Colo and Bareth.